

I. C. BRAND

EDWARD MARSHALL

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Lieutenant Phillips, U. S. V., had been inspecting government property out in the coral, but the heat had driven him into his tent, which was pitched just on the edge of a coffee plantation.

It was at the time when our government was withdrawing from Porto Rico the vast number of horses, army wagons and other transportation paraphernalia which had been necessary during the war. Inspection duty is only given to men who are thoroughly trustworthy. Especially is this true in Porto Rico. There were large quantities of government property there after the surrender, most of it in good condition. The planters thereabouts, who had lost a season's crops through the war, were anxious to cheaply re-equip their plantations with wagons, horses and mules. It was because the honest gentlemen had a tendency to offer "inducements" to inspecting officers to condemn good property, which the planters could afterward buy for a song at the auction, that special care was used in the selection of inspecting officers. Lieutenant Phillips was one of the elect.

On such government property as is condemned the "I. C." brand is placed. "I. C." means inspected and condemned. It is not wise for a civilian to have in his possession any property which bears the mark "U. S." and does not also bear the mark "I. C." Both are stenciled in black paint on tentage canvas, blankets and such like, burned into the bodies of wagons and other wooden articles and branded on the flanks of horses and mules.

Lieutenant Phillips kept the iron in his own possession for fear they might be used unscrupulously. He carried them, with their braziers still half full of hot coals, to the rear of his tent so that what little breeze there was would blow the heat away from him. Then he removed his heavier garments.

It had been a hard day for the lieutenant. Early in the morning he had been chief witness at a court martial which had convicted an American soldier of having cruelly treated his wife, a beautiful Porto Rican girl. The accused, Luigi Aramando, was a swarthy fellow of Italian parentage.

Lieutenant Phillips remembered with discomfort the fierce look the man had thrown at him as, handcuffed, he had been led away to the guardhouse. But, although the lieutenant had the pink cheeks of a girl and never a suspicion of a mustache upon his upper lip, he had a reputation for fearlessness.

Before he settled down to sleep he released from the ventilated box a pair of little lizards. They are of the variety called chameleons and can be easily tamed by any one who will occasionally give them a sip of sugar and water, a few flies or some other dainties dear to the heart. Many of our soldiers in Porto Rico so tamed them, and Lieutenant Phillips was among their number.

When he finally lay down on his camp cot they took their stations, one upon his pillow, one upon his chest. They knew instinctively that he did not like to have them on his face, for whenever they trespassed on this territory he moved restlessly, but their presence near his face was quite sufficient to keep most of the flies away.

While the lieutenant was making all these preparations for his sleep there was an unpleasant eye watching him through the open space left by the lifting of the back flap of the tent. The eye was in the head of the man whom the lieutenant had given evidence against that morning. Luigi Aramando had escaped. Below the eye, but wholly hidden in the bush, there were two hands, and in one of them there was a knife. The man was waiting until the lieutenant should fall asleep.

The tent's flaps moved lazily in the sleepy breeze. Now and then one of the little lizards made a lightning dart, and a fly had perished. The lieutenant slept peacefully. Everything was as it should be when noon approaches in the tropics.

Still the figure crouched, watchful and silent. At length the man crept forward till he was full in the tent; then he stopped and drew from his blouse a tiny vial. He was near enough to have used the knife, but he evidently had other purposes. Perhaps he wished to gloat over his victim before the blow fell. His glance had fallen upon the brazier and the brandling iron.

Slowly and noiselessly he rose to his feet. It was a mistake, for it startled the lizards. Disobeying their training, they scampered over the face of the sleeper.

It half woke him, and he looked up lastly, but before he could more than catch a glimpse of the evil eyes and gleaming blade, before he could halloo for help, the man flung himself upon him and in the lieutenant's nostrils entered the deadly fumes of chloroform. Then he lost consciousness.

The Italian raised himself cautiously—the stupor might be feigned. But a moment's scrutiny relieved his fears. In a twinkling he had bound the lieutenant hand and foot and thrust a gag into his mouth.

"Killing wouldn't be enough," the desperado muttered fiercely. "I'll mark him for life, so I will."

The lizards meanwhile had darted up on the canvas of the tent. They had done all that they could in waking the lieutenant. They could not fight for him.

their beady eyes the intruder thrust the iron into the brazier. The lieutenant's eyes were open now, for the force of the opiate was spent. The desperado turned and caught their undaunted glance.

"Fie of a lieutenant!" he said viciously. "It is now I who have the power. I will wait until the iron heat, then we shall see what we shall see." And he kicked the helpless figure before he turned again to the brazier.

As he watched the metal turn from black to gray and flush into redness, a cruel smile disclosed his fanglike teeth.

"The most ready, my lieutenant," he said tauntingly.

Noiselessly the tent flap swayed, as if moved by a gentle breeze. The man's back was turned. He was too intent on the brazier to see a slight figure which slipped through the aperture. It was Isabel, his wife.

The girl's eyes dilated with horror as she glanced from the bound lieutenant to the deadly preparations of his enemy. Then with a little movement she snatched the pistol which lay on the table. At the sound the man at the brazier turned and found himself looking into the barrel held in her steady hands. He was a coward, and he quailed before her.

"Take those ropes off," she said imperiously in her musical Spanish, pointing to the lieutenant's bonds. "If you do not I will shoot you."

There was a tremor in her voice, but her eyes were undimmed.

The lieutenant watched her, fascinated. Her husband, suddenly accepting defeat, began to untie the knots. At length the captive was released and the two stood silently before her. Both seemed overawed by the beauty and fearlessness of the woman.

Still pointing with her pistol, she cried: "Now, go—go—go, Luigi, and never come back again." Without a word the desperado obeyed.

When the tent flap fell behind him the pistol dropped from her trembling fingers and she leaned against the table as if for support.

"Was it wrong to let him go?" she said appealingly. "You would have killed him if he had stayed, and I could not have stood that. I—loved him—once." There was a sob in her throat. "Now he will never dare to come back again. I shall be free from him. You will let him go for my sake?"

As the lieutenant glanced from the iron from which she had saved him to her pleading face he could not but consent. Yet, as she, too, disappeared behind the coffee bushes, he heard her choking sobs.

"The way of a woman is hard," said the lieutenant.

Castling a Statue. Stigmayer, a German goldsmith in the first part of the last century, having an ambition to attempt larger works than any he had accomplished, went to Naples in order to see the casting of Canova's statue of Charles III., but was denied the sight of certain secret technical processes. Stigmayer found them out for himself nevertheless and as soon as he went home made his first experiment on a statuette of Venus. Many delays occurred, and the excitement increased as the end drew near. By some mistake one of his assistants poured his molten metal into the air hole. Then the casting came to a standstill.

"The crowd of lookers on," writes the poor founder in his diary, "stood first dumb about me and then slipped out one by one and left me with my pain."

In a month a second casting was begun and failed. With unbroken courage he began the third cast, and on Christmas eve the metal was again poured in. It ran into the mold and spouted joyfully out at the air hole.

"Our joy knew no bounds," he declares. "We raised a loud cry of joy and embraced and kissed each other. Pasquale, the helper, kissed the head of Phidias coming out of the broken form and burned his mouth, for it had not had time to cool."

The Sign Was Ruinous. A member of the colored race who presides over the destinies of a barber shop in West Philadelphia is looking for a former customer who recently played a rather mean joke upon him. The customer in question was shaved regularly at the colored man's shop, and the proprietor held his opinion and advice in good regard. One morning the boss of the shop wanted a new and high toned sign to hang over the door, and he appealed to the aforesaid customer for an idea. The customer's wit was ready, and several days after the following sign was discovered hanging from the shop: "Tonsorial Abattoir."

The next day the regular customer passed the shop and noticed the following over the door: "Barber Shop."

The proprietor is waiting for the regular customer, and the regular customer is waiting for a little collection of excitement to blow over.—Philadelphia Press.

Know His Fate. "Silas, my lad," said the grocer to his new assistant, "who bought that moldy cheese today?"

"Missus Brown, sir," was the youth's reply.

"And the stale loaf we could not sell last night?"

"Missus Brown, sir."

"Where's that lump of rancid butter that the baker refused?"

"Missus Brown bought it, sir," was the answer.

"And the six eggs we could not sell a week since?"

"Missus Brown—Are you ill, sir?" asked Silas, as the grocer turned green and groaned.

"No, no! Only I'm going to tea at the Browns' tonight," replied the happy man as he wiped the perspiration from his face and sank into a chair.—London Tit-Bits.

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ESTATE OF CATHERINE HAYNER, deceased.
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